

**King County Agriculture Commission  
Minutes from March 9, 2006  
Mercerview Community Center  
Mercer Island WA**

**Commissioners Present:** Nancy Hutto, Bob Tidball, Ben Kodama, George Irwin, Michael Blakely, Roger Calhoon

**Staff:** Steve Evans, Judy Herring, Claire Dyckman, King County (KC) Department of Natural Resources and Parks (DNRP) Water and Land Resources Division (WLRD) Agriculture Programs; Priscilla Kaufmann, Steve Bleifuhs, Flood Hazard Management Program, WLRD; Lauren Smith, Director's Office, DNRP.

**Guest Agency Staff:** Josh Monahan, King Conservation District (KCD); Todd Murray, Washington State University Extension (WSU) KC.

**Guests:** Marilyn Cope, Staff, King County Council; Jeff McMorris, Staff, Councilmember Kathy Lambert; Anne Mack, P.L.A.N.

Nancy Hutto called the meeting to order.

**Approval of Minutes:** The Commission approved the minutes of the February meeting.

**Commission Roundabout:**

Roger Calhoon: Recruiting for a new farm worker, Roger is trying to figure out where new farmers are coming from. Talked with Lake Washington Voc/Tech Institute and is now on their board! Michael Blakely: Tilth Producers are putting on their third year of workshops, primarily focused on the west side: Full Circle; Oxbow, Centralia. Nancy Hutto: bees and Nancy are in a rest period. Bob Tidball: we are working on alternatives for the Farmland Preservation Covenants, looking at alternatives used elsewhere. Whatcom and Skagit counties are more focused on farming than we. Each have good points, we will have to pick and choose.

**Commission Business:**

***Decisions Made:***

**Motion:** Michael Blakely moved and Roger Calhoon seconded that the draft letter on the Flood Hazard Reduction Plan be edited and sent to the Executive. Motion passed.

Changes should include:

Clarify the letter - it is confusing.

Emphasize that we recognize the difference between policy and regulations. Use this opportunity to indicate that existing code should be used to insure that necessary agricultural structures may be placed in the floodplain. Do not prevent farmers from being good stewards of the land by making it expensive to put up what is needed for water quality.

Make sure that Stephanie Warden of DDES is copied in the letter.

***Recommendations:***

The Commission communicated with the Flood Hazard Reduction staff regarding the plan:

- The plan does not communicate the process by which policy flows into regulations.

- The plan says it is a multi-objective plan, yet fish habitat is discussed throughout while other uses of the floodplain are only mentioned once or twice. This makes it sound like a fish plan, not a flood plan.
- The Commission thanked them for indicating whether or not a project may affect agriculture.

The Commission communicated with John Roney of Snohomish County, endorsing common needs:

- Broadcast the message about where food will come from to address the false sense of security that is prevalent
- Get city folks behind agriculture, including the use of the media
- Tell the State Department of Agriculture what we need
- Participate in Snohomish County's regional "Focus on Farming" conference

The Commission communicated with Lauren Smith of DNRP regarding the Rural Commission:

- A member of the Agriculture should be on the Rural Commission
- Would Lauren please return in April or as appropriate to continue the discussion of the Rural Commission - its role and structure - as it unfolds.

### **Presentations:**

**Agriculture in Snohomish County:** John Roney, Coordinator of Agricultural Services for the Snohomish County Economic Development Team, outlined Snohomish County's initiative on agriculture - stem the loss of agricultural lands and identify the obstacles to agriculture and reported on the outcomes to date:

1. Redesigned their agriculture board to include more commercial agriculture
2. Constituted a 55 member Economic Development committee with three subcommittee goals:
  - a. what needs to be done to keep the land base for 100 years
  - b. how do we need to revamp the infrastructure that supports agriculture
  - c. what marketing and innovation is needed.

The County is currently:

  - a. implementing a pilot biodiesel program and two biodigesters
  - b. siting a slaughterhouse
  - c. approaching about 20 distinct agricultural groups that were identified to find out what they want: exporting or selling local? Where will they be in 15 years?
3. Began Outreach and Education including:
  - a. adopting a message about "Who is going to feed our kids in the future?"
  - b. taking County staff on a tour of farms
  - c. holding a two hour workshop with staff to address misunderstandings that "we are trying to let agriculture get away with a lot of things"
  - d. Executive breakfasts and Conferences with Council
  - e. Invited every legislature on a tour (only got two)
  - f. Supporting what farms and others are doing to educate kids
  - g. Took an action plan to each City Council
  - h. Establishing a web-site

4. Develop a cultural heritage strategy:
  - a. reestablish Monroe fair as a primarily agricultural festival
  - b. intending to build a museum at Monroe for mining, logging, farming
  - c. provide grant monies for farmers to fix up their building/lands so that they don't send the message that farming is an industry that is waning.

**King County Draft Flood Hazard Reduction Plan:** Priscilla Kaufmann and Steve Bleifuhs of King County Water and Land presented the items of interest to agriculture in the draft plan, and entertained discussion with the Commission.

**Rural Commission:** Lauren Smith; reported on the Rural Initiative and the proposed Rural Commission. She asked the Agriculture Commission for their views on the proposed Rural Commission and how it might relate to the Agriculture Commission.

**Public Comment:** None.

**Calendar:**

Regulatory Committee will meet March 16<sup>th</sup> to continue work on FPP covenants.